



Soldier briefs Afghan police during operation to assess night activities and gather intelligence in Paktika Province

U.S. Army (Kevin Martin)

Establishing a Framework for Intelligence Education and Training

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In January 2010, Major General Michael T. Flynn, in conjunction with Captain Matt Pottinger and Paul D. Batchelor, published a paper that made the U.S. Intelligence Community (IC) stand up and shout. Titled *Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan*, the paper attempted to address the weaknesses the authors saw in the collection and use of intelligence in the field. However, the paper inadvertently situated itself in a debate regarding the utility of education and training in the intelligence world—a context that has real effects on the subject the authors sought to improve.

For Flynn and his colleagues, the “tendency to overemphasize detailed information about the enemy at the expense of the political, economic, and cultural environment that supports it”¹ highlights the difference between tactical and strategic thinking. This dichotomy, however, betrays the essence of a debate that, in more detail, underscores the importance of mental flexibility and agile adaptive behavior. For while *training* equips a person with necessary skills and attributes that can be robotically replicated, *education* allows an individual to move beyond the “instructions” and adapt to incorrect or poorly written instructions, or none at all, to improvise training in order to get the job done. In other words, the reason why the IC can be “failing” in the field is that operators are trying to bend the environment to their training instead of being flexible and agile enough to make their knowledge fit the environment.

The National Defense Intelligence College, now being redesignated the National Intelligence University (NIU), is chartered to provide intelligence education to members of the IC. Its programs are focused on national security challenges including the more traditional intelligence goal of understanding adversarial capabilities and intentions, along with broader intelligence challenges such as sociocultural trends and conflicts, failed and failing states, terrorism, proliferation, and the rise of non-state actors.² However, creating and implementing education programs that address the broad and divergent needs of the IC to allow it to successfully carry out its mission necessitate an understanding of intelligence, the importance of training, the need for and nature of intelligence education, and the ability to synthesize all of these elements.



President meets with intelligence and security officials in Oval Office

White House (Pete Souza)

Intelligence

The IC’s primary mission “is to collect and convey the essential information the President and members of the policymaking, law enforcement, and military communities require to execute their appointed duties.”³ Yet each agency and organization has its own culture, goals, and approaches to identify and convey “essential information.” For example, what the U.S. Department of State (DOS) identifies as “essential” is different than what the Department of Defense (DOD) deems “essential.” DOS goals are to “[a]dvance freedom for the benefit of the American people and the international community by helping to build and sustain a more democratic, secure, and prosperous world composed of well-governed states that respond to the needs of their people, reduce widespread poverty, and act responsibly within the international system.”⁴ The DOD mission “is to provide necessary forces and capabilities to the Combatant Commanders in support of the National Security and Defense Strategies.”⁵

While the missions of the two departments are complimentary, DOS is best described as *proactive*, while the DOD mission can be considered *reactive*. Thus, the intelligence needed to craft policy and conduct foreign policy for DOS is different than the intelligence needed to assess and

respond to threats from adversaries for DOD. Trying to identify and define the “essential information,” let alone “collect and convey” that information, can become overwhelming.

For NIU, intelligence studies are based upon the *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (NSS). This, however, does nothing to narrow the understanding of intelligence. On the contrary, the NSS is “focused on renewing American leadership so that [America] can more effectively advance [American] interests in the 21st century.”⁶ By identifying the world “as it is” and the world “as [America] seeks,” the NSS details the domestic and foreign goals for the Nation. These goals include strengthening U.S. national capacity (defense, diplomacy, economic, development, homeland security, strategic communications, the American people, and the private sector); disrupting, dismantling, and defeating al Qaeda and other violent extremists; reversing the spread of weapons of mass destruction; advancing peace, security, and opportunity in the Middle East; investing in strong and capable partners; achieving cyber security; strengthening education and human capital; encouraging technological innovation; achieving sustainable growth and development; strengthening institutions; and promoting traditional American goals of democracy, human rights, and religious

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U.S. Army (Seth Laughter)



Civilian training developer observes Army human intelligence collector during role-playing exercise to improve Soldiers' information-gathering skills

freedom.⁷ Intelligence, or the “essential information,” then, is the information needed to support or implement the goals of the NSS.⁸

Implementation of the NSS requires information from a vast array of sources and disciplines. The information needed to disrupt a single terrorist is different than the information needed to dismantle a terrorist organization. More important, the information needed to prevent future terrorists or terrorist organizations from threatening U.S. interests requires knowledge from the disciplines of political science, psychology, sociology, and economics, among others, and the patience to wait decades—or more—to see the fruition of policy. Vital to these efforts is an understanding of when, and under what

circumstances, the IC should focus on training, education, or both.

Education Is Not an Assembly Line

The rapid pace of globalization, coupled with the rise of nonstate actors and other nontraditional adversaries, means an ever-changing threat environment. The fact that the IC has made ongoing training and education a priority is easily identified in the Vision and Mission statement posted by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI):

The United States Intelligence Community must constantly strive for and exhibit three characteristics essential to our effectiveness. The IC must be integrated: a team making the whole greater than the sum of its parts. We must also be agile: an enterprise with an adaptive, diverse, continually learning, and mission-driven intelligence workforce that embraces innovation and takes initiative. Moreover, the IC must exemplify America's values: operating under the rule of law, consistent with Americans' expectations for protection of privacy and civil liberties, respectful of

human rights, and in a manner that retains the trust of the American people.⁹

There is no more established way of standardizing engagement and integration than through education. In an ethnographic manner, one can witness the full life cycle of knowledge transference when a group of individuals—preferably from a mixed cultural, linguistic, and/or professional background—learns, deconstructs, debates, and reconstructs ideas. In this manner, education serves as a vehicle for engagement that few, if any, other forums can replicate or even simulate.

By way of agility, the best way to ensure an analyst's aptitude to adapt is to continually value nonlinear thinking that is based on the initiative of asking questions that may seem outlandish, facile, or even downright bizarre, in order to process the full spectrum of information before reconstructing a solution from the complex, palpable amount of information that is exposed in the search for an answer.

These aforementioned attributes, if they are to form the proposed endstate for how the IC should function, must find a home within

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the organic nature of what education comprises. However, training and education are different concepts, and while these differences should be celebrated for what they are and what they do, an understanding of the minute details that make them unique offers a way of not confusing the strengths that make each of them mandatory for the IC mission.

In the simplest terms, training is the process of skills acquisition, while education is the process of knowledge acquisition. Training and education are related and often overlap, but the goals are different. The IC routinely engages in training activities—from learning how to utilize technology to learning how to write an analytical product. At the heart of IC training is learning how to be a “good” analyst. Over time and with repeated training, the goal is to produce a highly skilled and competent IC professional—or an individual who knows the “instructions” and how to effectively and efficiently implement them.

Education has different goals, but there are specific skills—or training—necessary to achieve those goals. The required skills are referred to as “information literacy” and describe “a student’s competency in acquiring and processing information in search for understanding.”¹⁰ Those skills include the ability to determine the type of information needed; access that information effectively and efficiently; critically evaluate sources and content of information; effectively use information and understand the social, economic, and legal issues that surround its use; and observe appropriate regulations, laws, and policies related to the access of information.¹¹ The acquisition of these skills is fundamental to any education program; however, it is only the means to the goal and not the goal itself.

In many respects, “knowledge for its own sake” is the ultimate goal of education. But beyond this philosophical aspiration, education seeks to expose students to a wide variety of knowledge sources (traditional and nontraditional), epistemologies (“ways of knowing”), and the critical thinking and reasoning skills necessary to synthesize and integrate knowledge. Undergraduate programs typically seek to create consumers of knowledge, while graduate programs aim to create producers of knowledge. Both require students to challenge and question established beliefs, but, more important, both require students to challenge and question their own mindsets or perspectives (“way of understanding an issue or problem”).

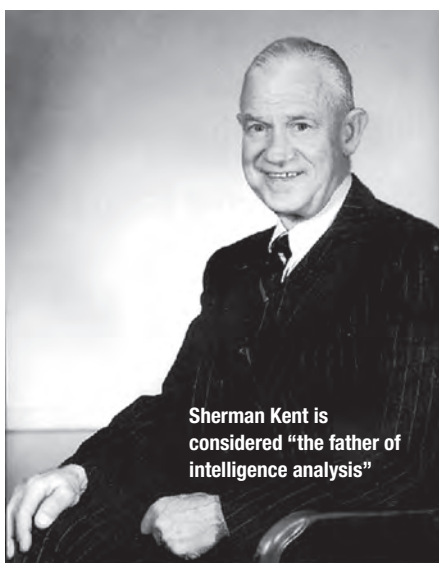
The goal of intelligence education, then, is to produce individuals who can creatively explore, describe, or explain intelligence issues or problems. Succinctly, the ultimate goal of intelligence education is the acquisition of transferable knowledge.

Beginning with a foundation of information literacy, and given the breadth of what constitutes intelligence, developing an intelligence education program can be daunting. In particular, an effective and “standard” canon—a selection of authors, books, or other information that is considered the basis of the discipline—is impossible to create. Intelligence relies on research from a variety of recognized disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, physics, engineering, history, political science, communications, agriculture, economics, and finance. In short, the field of intelligence is a true interdisciplinary field encompassing the full range of both the social and the natural sciences. Each of these disciplines (and the subdisciplines they have spawned) has its own canon. These canons, however, create unique perspectives that can unintentionally stymie critical and creative thinking and reasoning in intelligence—for example, the discipline of economics approaches political instability differently than the discipline of sociology. But the lack of a canon and the itinerant educational goals associated with an interdisciplinary approach present their own problems: educational goals “can rarely be stated in terms as student mastery of a specifiable body of knowledge, although certain skills may be identified.”¹² This may, however,

be an advantage for intelligence education as the removal of discipline-specific standards means that the focus of student education is the development of intellectual capacity and critical and creative thinking.¹³

While the IC is fond of the term *subject matter expert*, the necessity of adopting an interdisciplinary approach calls it into question in relation to intelligence education. This term is used to lend authority and credibility to particular individuals or analytical products, but it has little relevance in intelligence education. An educator or student may become knowledgeable on a particular topic or region; however, there is no endpoint in knowledge acquisition. Therefore, the possibility of a student knowing more than the educator in intelligence education is an established, welcomed fact that lends to a more diverse and rich learning environment. In other words, educators are forever students, and students have the ability to sharpen and expand an educator’s knowledge. As educationalist John Dewey noted, “Education is not a preparation for life, education is life itself.”

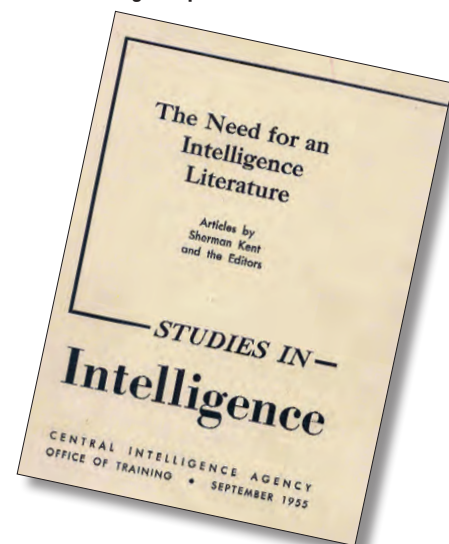
Perhaps more importantly in understanding the difference between intelligence education as practiced by the NIU compared to other, nonclassified environment “intelligence education” institutions, the NIU positions itself inside the tactical intelligence environment but also draws from continuing advances in research throughout the social and natural sciences. This dictates the NIU need to continually “churn” educators and education by infusing the cadre of IC professionals with



Sherman Kent, 1903-1986.

Central Intelligence Agency

Kent essay published in inaugural issue of *Studies in Intelligence* explains literature needed for intelligence profession





Soldiers from military intelligence battalion parade during change of command ceremony

U.S. Air Force (Lou Czarnecki)



Academic, government, military, and international experts discuss broad range of deterrence issues during U.S. Strategic Command Deterrence Symposium

DOD



Secretary Gates speaks at U.S.-Afghan security consultation forum at Pentagon

DOD (R.D. Ward)

fresh epistemologies and perspectives, resulting in new approaches to problem-solving and research. The world is not static, and neither is knowledge. While the institutional knowledge that specialists in the IC bring to intelligence education is invaluable, an occasional shakeup in education is a necessity to avoid becoming locked into one epistemology, one perspective, and one approach to understanding intelligence. New and creative approaches are paramount to remain forward-thinking and relevant to supporting U.S. national security objectives. In other words, when an IC call for standards becomes an excuse to sideline innovation, the result is nothing more than stagnation masquerading as standardization. For the IC, this is the most dangerous route that can be imagined because, as opposed to graduates from other universities, NIU graduates have a vested interest in identifying concepts, techniques, and even radical hypotheses (think “red team” assessments) that will quell nominal indicators before they become violent enablers.

‘Til Death Do Us Part

The interdisciplinary and broad nature of intelligence education stands in sharp contrast with the specific training needs and goals of the 17 agencies and organizations that comprise the IC. The ODNI was created to coordinate these needs and goals as well as develop IC-wide analytical standards.¹⁴ IC professionals are trained on these standards, and they do complement intelligence education. But the standards should not dictate educational goals. Education inspires individuals to critically evaluate information and creatively engage in transformational problem-solving. In other words, as opposed to training, which is didactic in its approach, higher education is essentially Socratic learning. As such, to maintain a vivacious and networked strategic education, knowledge

exploration cannot focus on teaching students to merely regurgitate information and to pass exams; rather, it must communicate models and material that introduce, and ultimately stimulate, independent investigations. Accomplishing this should be not only the aim of intelligence education, but also the point of departure from training to education.

Whether about war, counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, or the impact of religion on threat analysis, intelligence education should accentuate critical and creative reasoning and thinking and the application of theoretical constructs into current events. By challenging educators and students to move beyond the superficial treatment of course material as “dead” (in the case of historical studies) or “inapplicable” (in terms of “academic” theory), education programs must focus on the construction of paradigms of understanding that foster personal growth, including an appreciation of individual potential and an acknowledgment that there is a definitive symbiotic relationship between the educator and the student. This foundation avoids the detrimental effects of becoming the student’s “friend” by promoting professional development only or of conveying an image of the frightening, unapproachable, know-it-all professor. With this approach, therefore, a balance is devised where flexibility and structure coexist to create an atmosphere of inquisitiveness and tactical engagement. After all, the student will become the educator one day.

Examples of the success of the above model abound. However, there seems to be a culturally ingrained belief in the IC that there is an exclusive nature between training and education. This belief, while not overtly stated, is covertly contemplated and symbolically given form as: “Those who can, do. Those who can’t, teach.”

This quote, in the immediate context of this article, betrays an interesting mentality when contemplating the conversion of a tradecraft practitioner into a strategic thinker and palpably highlights the difficulty in assuring people that education and training are not a matter of a bipolar choice. Instead, training and education represent a phased developmental process in which training will reach its limit but further enhancement through education is necessary to confront national security challenges. Thus, if the Central Intelligence Agency’s (CIA’s) successful incorporation of academics, led by Sherman Kent, lays the very foundation of today’s IC, then it is time again to see the utility of “academic” culture when contemplating how the IC will engage with a world where globalization and the “openness of modern information networks . . . undermine U.S. interests.”¹⁵ This is why strategic thinkers require a background beyond tradecraft with an aggressive propensity toward taking on whatever challenges exist. For the IC, therefore, a lessons-learned future needs to be rebuilt upon the foundation that the CIA intuitively understood to be the best groundwork for strategic analysis (long-term forecasts and short-term solutions, methodological integration, and so forth) that is based on the fundamental principles of an inclusive education and not the personalized, exclusive tradecraft techniques of individual agencies.

There is uniform appreciation for education as a tool, but few beyond the profession are prepared to welcome, let alone absorb and understand, the complex methodologies and theoretical constructs that influence strategic planning and tactical implementation. Yet despite educationalist tendencies to organically think outside the box and see possibilities beyond short-term solutions based on tradecraft training, few practitioners are

the IC need not frame the argument as “either training or education,” but must look at where each, much like in a solid relationship, builds on its strengths to fill the other’s deficiencies

conscious of the utility of moving the concept of education away from being understood as merely a path toward career advancement and integrating it into the “doing” part of the IC. Therefore, success for the IC is truly a matter of “til death do us part” and not a matter of “divorce” based on mistrust of motives or misunderstanding of utility. To put this another way, look no further than the environments created from “big thinking” that directly influence the course of tactical tradecraft remodeling that happens, or should happen, when the environment of the operators changes.

Strategic Thinking that Created Tactical Advantage

In 1947, George F. Kennan’s “The Sources of Soviet Conduct” (originally published under the pseudonym “X” and also known as “The Long Telegram”) changed the entire foreign policy approach to the Soviet Union and ushered in the Cold War strategy of containment.¹⁶ More recently, Francis Fukuyama’s 1989 paper “The End of History” and 1992 book *The End of History and the Last Man* and Samuel Huntington’s 1993 response to Fukuyama, “The Clash of Civilizations?” combined to set the stage for post–Cold War thinking on the future of the nation-state with implications for the future of U.S. national security.¹⁷ The Fukuyama-Huntington continuum still spawns discussion, debate, and dissent within academic, government, and IC circles. Kennan, Fukuyama, and Huntington did not adhere to ODNI analytical standards: instead, they represent the possibilities associated with inspired critical and creative thinking and reasoning. Education affords students and educators the opportunity to engage in this type of “big thinking” and reevaluation of the “conventional wisdom.”

Lying between the binary positions of defensive and offensive operations and proactive and reactive mission statements, both education and training are committed to protecting the integrity of that indispensable component of successful operations: col-

laboration. Accordingly, conceptualizing the complex task involved in managing the IC enterprise is less likely to be productive in the hands of mere didactic practitioners—that is to say, those who “do”—as it is in the fluidly instinctive capabilities of Socratic modelers, or those who “teach.”

As in all partnerships, arguments over who does the most work will ensue, and the temptation to “choose sides” will be compelling. The choice, however, would be a false one. The IC need not frame the argument as “either training or education,” but must look at where each, much like in a solid relationship, builds on its strengths to fill the other’s deficiencies. In terms of a historical example, both training and education proved invaluable in the Apollo 13 mission, the “successful failure,” where the steadfast knowledge that training brings successfully complemented the improvisational nature of education.

To create an environment that institutionalizes success, the IC must first come to terms with the value of intelligence education. Doing so requires a firm understanding of what intelligence education is and what it can do, as opposed to overemphasizing training, which is better understood but does not address the full spectrum of the threat confronting the United States today. As such, only in this manner can the IC justifiably assess the point at which more training or more education is better suited to gauge those threats and to make strategic suggestions for the future.

This debate over the role of training and education is long overdue and is necessary for the most efficient allocation of threat analysis and intelligence resources. While NIU is focused on strategic education, advocating for strategic engagement without tactically applicable knowledge serves no purpose in today’s world. Only when education is seen as the necessary next step to training can the United States ever hope to establish a tactically agile and mentally flexible community of intelligence professionals who rise to the challenges of the moment. And while the stakes may seem exceedingly small between these two forms of analyst improvement, it is only in such detail that relationships build a platform for sustainable success. **JFQ**

NOTES

¹ Michael T. Flynn, Matt Pottinger, and Paul D. Batchelor, *Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making*

Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, January 2010), 7–8, available at <www.cnas.org/files/documents/publications/AfghanIntel_Flynn_Jan2010_code507_voices.pdf>.

² National Defense Intelligence College, Academic Year 2010–2011 catalog, 7, available at <www.ndic.edu/academics/pdf/CC2010_web.pdf>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Fiscal Year 2010 Agency Financial Report: Smart Power in Action*, 5, available at <www.state.gov/documents/organization/150505.pdf>.

⁵ U.S. Army, 2005 Posture Statement, available at <www.army.mil/aps/05/>.

⁶ *The National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: The White House, May 2010), 1, available at <www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ See John G. Heidenrich, “The Intelligence Community’s Neglect of Strategic Intelligence,” *Studies in Intelligence* 51, no. 2, 15–25, for a comprehensive examination of strategic intelligence.

⁹ Office of the Director of National Intelligence, “Vision and Mission,” available at <www.dni.gov/mission.htm>. Emphasis in original.

¹⁰ Middle States Commission on Higher Education, *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education: Requirements of Affiliation and Standards for Accreditation* (Philadelphia, PA: Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 2006), 42.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Michael Field and Russell Lee, “Assessment of Interdisciplinary Programmes,” *European Journal of Education* 27, no. 3 (1992), 278.

¹³ J.W. Astin, *Assessment for Excellence: The Philosophy and Practice of Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1992), 6.

¹⁴ Office of the Director of National Intelligence, Intelligence Community Directive Number 203, “Analytical Standards,” June 21, 2007, available at <www.dni.gov/electronic_reading_room/ICD_203.pdf>.

¹⁵ Office of the Director of National Intelligence, “DNI Names Robert Bryant New National Counterterrorism Executive,” news release no. 31–09, September 18, 2009.

¹⁶ “X” (George F. Kennan), “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” *Foreign Affairs* 25, no. 4 (1947), 566–582.

¹⁷ Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History,” *The National Interest* (Summer 1989), which was expanded into *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992). Also, Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” *Foreign Affairs* 73, no. 3 (Summer 1992), 22–49, later expanded into *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).